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THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC
CONDITIONS OF THE JEWS IN PALESTINE
AT THE TIME OF CHRIST AND THE APOSTLES

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of New Testament Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
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(Forward)

The social, economic, and political conditions in a given country have always affected the life of the Church. Therefore, to clearly evaluate any period in the history of the Church, it is necessary to look to its background in the secular government.

At the time of Christ and His Apostles the history of the Church and that of the State were still quite closely integrated, but the bonds of union were slowly being severed. Up to that time there had been an historical unity in the theocratic state of the Jews which has never been equaled in the history of man. With the advent of Christ and His Apostles the history of the Jewish state and church were no longer identical in practice but each began to function in its own separate field of activity. The results of this divided interest is shown in the subsequent history of the Jews. The Jewish state, as such, suffered complete dissolution at the hands of the Romans in 70 A.D., while the Church witnessed the separation of the followers of Christ from her ranks and the founding of the Christian Church through the work of Christ and His Apostles.

It is in this period of transition that we are specifically interested and which falls within the scope of our heading. To fully understand this era in history with which the New Testament deals, and to appreciate the environment of Jesus and His Apostles, it is of the greatest importance to have a clear and graphic understanding of the political situation of their day and time. Jesus and His disciples lived and labored in Palestine during the period of Roman domination, and this foreign influence figured largely in their lives, particularly in the lives of Christ and the Apostle Paul.

How did this Roman domination come about? How did it influence Jewish political life? What role did the Herods play in this vassal state? These and similar questions all have their answers in the political history of the Jews during this period.

The chief sources of information for this period in Jewish history are the works of the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus. It is largely his work, The Antiquities of the Jews, that forms the basis and source material for this study. Keeping within the limits of our heading, references to contemporary religious events will be made only where necessity and sequence demand.

I. Preceding the Roman Rule

(Introduction)

At the time of Christ's birth, Palestine was no longer enjoying political independence. Around the beginning of the sixth century, before Christ, when Necho, king of Egypt, was totally defeated by Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish in 606, Palestine fell into the hands of the Babylonians. Palestine chafed under this foreign rule and soon began to revolt. As a consequence, the Babylonians returned and destroyed Jerusalem in 585 B.C., and led away the greater part of the Jewish population to their own country in successive deportations. This period of exile is now termed "The Babylonian Captivity." In 538 B.C., Cyrus, king of Persia, broke the power of the Babylonian government. It was he who gave the Jewish exiles permission to return to Palestine. This was, of course, a restoration of the Jewish nation, and not of the Jewish state, for Palestine was now placed under the authority of a Persian satrap. The Jews remained under Persian domination for approximately two hundred years—537-332 B.C. The Persians were generally kind and considerate in their dealings with the Jews and allowed them the free exercise of their religious observances and practically national autonomy.

This era of apparent peace under the sovereignty of the Persians was at length interrupted with the rise of Alexander the Great who conquered the East and brought Palestine under his sway. Under his rule, the Jews were given even more liberties, but his rule was of

short duration. Upon his death in 323 B.C., three of his generals—Antigonus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy—all laid claim to that part of his empire which included Palestine. In the contest that followed, Ptolemy was the victor, and now the fate of Palestine fell into the hands of the Egyptians. This domination of the Egyptian kings lasted for one hundred and twenty-two years. As an Egyptian province, the Jews continued to be treated with considerable lenience and enjoyed material prosperity. However, they became very susceptible to Hellenism through this foreign influence; and this Hellenizing of the Jews became a matter of compulsion under the Graeco-Syrian kingdom of the Seleucids.

It was during the reign of the Egyptian king, Ptolemy Philopater, that the malcontents among the Jews helped Antiochus III of Syria overthrow the Egyptian rule which resulted in the rule of the Seleucids over Palestine. When Antiochus IV, called Epiphanes, determined to Hellenize his provinces, he failed to take into consideration the effect this might have upon his Jewish subjects and soon had the Jews in a state of open rebellion. The growing unrest and dissatisfaction over this foreign policy of Hellenization of the Jews was brought to a head in 167 B.C., under the leadership of Mattathias, a Jewish priest who had taken refuge in the village of Modin. This uprising is known in history as "The Maccabean Revolt." It was the Maccabees who were able to regain the last vestigages of Jewish independence before the coming of their Roman conquerors. Mattathias himself died within two years after the revolt but his five sons continued the work of their father, all giving their lives in the struggle for Jewish independence. Under Simon, the last surviving son, the Jews were able to enjoy a high degree of prosperity and independence through a great deal of political intrigue.

At this time, the Romans were becoming a constant threat to the Syrians and agitated political unrest within the Syrian state by supporting various factions and pretenders to the throne. In return for Simon's help to Demetrius II, king of Syria, in resisting one of these pretenders, Demetrius renounced all claim to tribute and acknowledged the political autonomy of Judea, while Simon, in turn, made a political alliance with Rome. Conflict with the Syrians did not end here, as successive leaders of the Syrians attempted to regain their hold upon Palestine. Through frequent renewals of their alliance with Rome, however, Palestine was able to maintain her independence.

Under John Hyrcanus, the grandson of Mattathias, the Jews were in possession of the ancient boundaries of the Promised Land, and his son, Aristobulus I, was the first to take the title of king. Before this time, the power of the Maccabees was always precarious, and as a result, they were more like guerrilla leaders than established rulers. Even the successors of John Hyrcanus—Aristobulus I, Alexander Jannaeus, his wife, Alexandra, Hyrcanus II, and Aristobulus II—would never have been able to maintain their positions as rulers of the Jews had it not been for the anarchy that still prevailed in the neighboring powers.¹

Meanwhile the Romans had long been watching the political developments within Palestine with growing interest and made use of civil war to make inroads into this territory. Civil strife arose upon the death of Queen Alexandra, the seventh Maccabean ruler. Her eldest son, Hyrcanus II, was her rightful heir, but his brother, Aristobulus I, was very ambitious for power. He succeeded in convincing the indolent

1. Charles Guignebert, The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus, p. 33.

Hyrchanus with but little pressure to give him his sovereignty and to return to his life as a private noble.

At this time, however, a certain Idumean, by the name of Antipater, became prominent in Jewish court life, whose family was destined to play a dominant role in the subsequent history of the Jews. Hyrcanus had subdued the Idumeans during his reign but had permitted them to remain in that country if they would submit to circumcision and the Jewish laws and become Jewish proselytes. Josephus tells us: "They were so desirous of living in the country of their forefathers, that they submitted to the use of circumcision, and the rest of the Jewish ways of living; at which time, therefore this befell them, that they were hereafter no other than Jews."²

Antipater was the son of Antipas whom Alexander Jannæus had made governor of Idumea. He now began to exert a strong influence on the mild Hyrcanus and had succeeded in having himself appointed his chief minister. Antipater sensed the growing ambitions of Aristobulus and the two became rivals for power in the Jewish state. Antipater became very outspoken in his protests against Aristobulus' usurpation of his brother's throne and constantly urged Hyrcanus to reinstate himself. He was anxious to regain that power which he had formerly possessed when Hyrcanus ruled, for he saw in this future advantages for himself and his family. Through certain territorial concessions he was able to induce Aretas, the king of Arabia, to assist Hyrcanus to regain his throne. Aretas made a successful expedition against Aristobulus and forced him within the walled confines of the Temple area in Jerusalem where he was besieged.³

2. Flavius Josephus, The Antiquities of the Jews, xiii, 9, 1.

3. Jos. Ant., xiv, 2, 1.

While this private war between these two brothers was being carried on in Jerusalem, Pompey, the great Roman general, was waging war against Tigranes in Armenia. He had sent Scaurus, one of his auxiliary generals, into Syria, who, finding the city of Damascus already in Roman hands, was left free to come with haste into Judea to quell the civil strife in that territory. It is at this time that the Romans made their first military appearance in Palestine. Hyrcanus and Aristobulus II both sent embassages to Scaurus, offering him equal gifts for his military aid. Josephus tells us that Scaurus accepted the offer of Aristobulus II, of whom he quotes as having said:

He was rich, and had a great soul, and desired to obtain nothing but was moderate; whereas the other was poor, and tenacious, and made incredible promises in hopes of greater advantages; for it was not the same thing to take a city that was exceeding strong and powerful, as it was to eject out of the country some fugitives, with a greater number of Nabateans, who were not very warlike people.⁴

Scaurus thereupon defeated the Nabateans and declared them enemies of Rome and restored Aristobulus II to his former power. For a while, Aristobulus held undisputed possession in Palestine, but this settlement by Scaurus proved only a provisional measure, for Pompey himself came to Damascus in 63 B.C. Three embassages appeared before him. Those of Hyrcanus and Aristobulus II accused each other, while representatives of the Jewish people expressed the desire not "to be under kingly government, because the form of government they received from their forefathers was that of subjection to the priests of that God whom they worshipped."⁵ After hearing the various representative groups, Pompey promised a decision upon his return from an expedition against the Nabateans.

4. Jos. Ant., xiv, 2, 3.
5. Jos. Ant., xiv, 3, 2.

Aristobulus II meanwhile became leary of Pompey's decision and began to set up defenses within the country. Pompey was incensed by this action on the part of Aristobulus, collected his forces, and marched into Judea. Twice he drove Aristobulus into conference; the third time forcing him to sign written orders for the surrender of all his fortresses. Immediately after signing this agreement, Aristobulus fled to Jerusalem to prepare for resistance. Pompey advanced on the city, and Aristobulus, finding his forces too divided for effective resistance, sued for peace. He offered money and the surrender of the capital, but when Pompey's auxiliaries advanced to take Jerusalem they found the gates locked. Pompey at once ordered the seizure of Aristobulus and prepared to take the city by force. The Romans besieged the temple mount for three months without forcing their way into the enclosure. The siege might have continued much longer had it not been for the fact that the Jews refused to take up arms on the Sabbath Day. Upon discovering this, the Romans were finally able to effect a breach in the walls on a Sabbath day in June, 63 B.C. The temple hill was captured after a fearful slaughter of some twelve thousand Jews, while Aristobulus II and his children were bound and carried off to Rome to grace the Roman triumph of Pompey.⁶

6. Jos. Ant., xiv, 4-5.

II. During the Roman Rule

A. The Conquest of the Romans and the Rise of the Herodians

With the victory of Pompey over Jerusalem in 63 B.C., the Roman period of Jewish history began. With his conquest, the freedom of the Jewish people was completely overthrown. Those who had promoted the war were beheaded while Jerusalem and the entire country of Palestine were made tributary to the Roman state. The boundaries of the Jewish territory were greatly curtailed, and this contracted Jewish territory was given to Hyrcanus II, who was recognized as the high priest without the title of king.¹ The independence of the Jewish nation was at an end and the Jewish high priest became a vassal of the Romans. The exact political position of Palestine at this time cannot be definitely ascertained with any degree of certainty. However, this much is known, that it was subject to Rome and was under supervision of the Roman governor of Syria.^{2 & 3}

In 57 B.C., Alexander, a son of the imprisoned Aristobulus II, escaped from Rome and made an attempt to secure the government of Palestine for himself. He was immediately prevented in these efforts by an order of the newly appointed Roman pro-consul in Syria. At the same time, this pro-consul, Gabinius, made a significant change in the political field in Palestine. He stripped Hyrcanus II of his political power and left him only the right to function as the high priest in the Temple. He also divided the territory into five districts, with

1. Jos. Ant. xiv, 4, 4.

2. Emil Schürer, A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, Div. I, Vol. I, p. 371.

3. Syria was now a Roman province.

Jerusalem, Gazara, Amathus, Jericho, and Sepphoris as their capitals. This latter arrangement did not last long but was eliminated by an order of Caesar when he came to power.⁴

Meanwhile attempts by Aristobulus II and his younger son, as well as a further attempt by Alexander, were made to secure the government in Palestine but all were checked successively. Alexander and Aristobulus were both eventually murdered by the adherents to Pompey.

Upon the death of Pompey, Hyrcanus II and Antipater quickly attached themselves to Caesar's party which was gaining power in Roman politics. Antipater, as the chief minister to Hyrcanus II, brought material and military aid to Caesar throughout his entire Egyptian campaign. He supplied Jewish troops to Mithradates, an auxiliary force to Caesar.⁵ At the end of this campaign, Caesar rewarded Hyrcanus II and Antipater by giving Hyrcanus the title of Ethnarch of the Jews and reinstated him into his former political status which Gabinius had taken from him when he set up his divisional arrangement in Palestine. At the same time, Antipater was given Roman citizenship and made Procurator of Judea. As evidence of the extent of the power and influence Antipater wielded in this new government we but need to look at the immediate appointments of his eldest son, Phasaël, as governor of Jerusalem, and Herod, another son, as governor of Galilee.⁶ It is this Herod who was destined to be known as "The Great" and who became one of the most outstanding figures in Jewish history during the New Testament era.

Soon after Herod had taken over his duties as governor in Galilee, he had a certain bandit leader by the name of Hezekiah, as well as many of his followers, put to death, in order to bring peace and safety to his

4. Schürer, *op. cit.*, Div. I, Vol. I, p. 372.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 377.

6. *Jos. Ant.*, xiv, 9.

domain. By this independent action, he aroused the hatred of the Jews who opposed the growing power of the foreign Idumean family of Antipater. They complained to Hyrcanus that he was allowing them to usurp all of his powers. Furthermore, by this action, Herod had broken one of their laws by taking a life without the sanction of the Sanhedrin. Therefore, Herod was summoned to appear before this court for trial.

Herod came to Jerusalem, upon the order of Hyrcanus, not in a humble and submissive manner, but accompanied by such a vast array of armed might that he succeeded in terrifying the entire assembly. One lone man, by the name of Sameas, arose, and, in prophetic denouncement, warned the Sanhedrin for their fear to act in this trial, saying: "This very man, whom you are going to absolve and dismiss, for the sake of Hyrcanus, will one day punish both you and your king himself also."⁷ This very prediction of Sameas was later fulfilled when Herod had this entire assembly killed, with the exception of Sameas, and later became responsible for the death of Hyrcanus II, as we shall see. When the Sanhedrin had been roused from their lethargy of fear and were ready to pronounce sentence upon Herod, Hyrcanus II managed his escape into Syria, "for he loved him as his own son."⁸

While in Syria, Herod gained the favor of the Syrian president, Sextus Caesar, and succeeded in purchasing the generalship of the army of Celesyria. This gave Herod even more power and military strength, and made him an even greater threat to the security of Hyrcanus. In fact, Herod advanced with his army to make war on Hyrcanus but was persuaded by his father and brother to give up this plan in view of the

7. Jos. Ant., xiv, 9, 4.

8. Ibid.

many kindnesses of Hyrcanus to their family. Herod finally consented, satisfying himself with the belief that he had at least made a show of his strength as a military leader.⁹

Meanwhile the parties of Caesar and Pompey were still at war. While Caesar was warring in Africa, Caecilius Bassus, an adherent of Pompey's party, succeeded in deposing Sextus Caesar, the president of Syria, who, in turn, was opposed by Vetus of the Caesarean party. Antipater favored Vetus and aided him in a military way by sending him auxiliary troops from among the Jews. It was during this struggle for supremacy in Syria that Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C. Immediately Marc Antony laid plans to avenge his death. He advanced upon M. Brutus and L. Cassius in a very hostile manner and drove them into the East in order to re-inforce their armies. Cassius went to Syria where the struggle between Bassus and Statius Marcus, who had since replaced Vetus, was still waging. Both of these factious groups joined forces with Cassius, and in this manner Cassius became the master of Syria.¹⁰

In order to support the large army of Cassius, the entire province of Syria was assessed by taxation. The Jews also had to contribute their share. Because of Herod's willing support in this taxation, Cassius rewarded him by making him governor of Coelestria.¹¹

During the collection of these taxes, a certain Malichus appeared upon the scene as one who was envious of Antipater's power. He, too, had ambitions of becoming an influential leader in Judea. Seeing that Antipater and Herod had won the favor of Cassius, he plotted for

9. Ibid.

10. Schürer, op. cit., Div. I, Vol. I, pp. 385-386.

11. Jos. Ant., xiv, 11 and Flavius Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, i, 11, 4.

Antipater's life. He accomplished this end by having the cupbearer of Hyrcanus II poison Antipater during a dinner held by Hyrcanus.¹²

Immediately Herod made plans to avenge his father's death and marched against Malichus with an army but was persuaded by his brother, Phasaël, to bide his time lest he arouse the anger of the people. Herod postponed the settling of this account and in the meantime secured the consent of Cassius to avenge the death of his father. Some time later he carried out this plan by having Malichus killed "with many wounds" following a dinner to which he had invited him as one of his guests.¹³

While Herod was settling this personal matter, a decisive battle was waged at Philippi in 42 B.C. at which place Antony and Octavian overcame Cassius. By this battle, Antony came into possession of all Asia. Immediately an embassy of the Jewish people appeared before Antony and complained of the tyrannical rule of Phasaël and Herod, but Herod was able to win the favor of Antony with large gifts of money. When Antony came into Syria, another embassy of one hundred men came to him and accused Herod again in the presence of Hyrcanus II. Having heard the accusations and the counter arguments against Herod's rule, Antony proceeded to ask Hyrcanus who governed the best, and Hyrcanus answered, "Herod."¹⁴ Because of this answer of Hyrcanus, and because of his remembrance of a cordial relationship which he had had with Antipater when he himself was a lieutenant under Gabinius in Syria, Antony appointed Herod and his brother, Phasaël, tetrarchs, "and committed the public affairs of the Jews to them." Through this decree of Antony,

12. Jos. Ant., xiv, 11, 4 and Jos. Wars, i, 11, 4.

13. Jos. Wars, i, 11, 8.

14. Jos. Ant., xiv, 11, 1.

Hyrcanus was now completely stripped of all those political powers which he had previously held in name only.¹⁵

Within a year's time after this appointment, Palestine was again overrun with new enemies—the Parthians. This was one power which the Romans had never quite conquered, and even before the battle at Philippi, the Parthians succeeded in occupying all of northern Syria. Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus II, now allied himself with the Parthians and made an attempt to gain the government for himself. He promised to give the Parthians a thousand talents and five hundred women if they would take the government from Hyrcanus and give it to him, and, at the same time, kill Herod.¹⁶ The Parthians accepted this offer of Antigonus and sent two divisions into Palestine, one headed by Pacorus and another by Barzapharnes. Antigonus himself entered the field and rallied great numbers to himself and attacked the king's palace but was eventually forced into the Temple by the armies of Herod and Phasaël. Meanwhile the Feast of Pentecost occurred and thousands of Jews flocked into Jerusalem, forcing Herod and Phasaël to take refuge in their palace. Josephus tells us that from here, Herod "sallied out upon the enemy, who lay in the suburbs, and fought courageously, and put many ten thousands to flight."¹⁷

When Pacorus, the Parthian general, arrived in Jerusalem, he succeeded in getting Phasaël and Hyrcanus II to go up into Galilee with him to the camp of Barzapharnes to conciliate this entire matter. Herod warned his brother that it was a trap, but his warning went

14. Jos. Ant., xiv, 13, 1.

15. Jos. Ant., xiv, 13, 3.

16. Jos. Ant., xiv, 13, 4.

unheeded. During the journey, Phasaël became suspicious of the Parthians and relayed these suspicions to his brother by messenger. Soon after their arrival at the camp of Barzapharnes his suspicions were confirmed for Hyrcanus and Phasaël were imprisoned.¹⁸

Herod realized the danger of his position, being surrounded by the armies of Pacorus, and so secretly escaped during the night with his family and a large following and went into Idumea. Herod all but despaired of his life during this flight and even attempted suicide but was restrained by those of his following. Again and again he was attacked by the Jews. When at last he arrived in Idumea he was met by his brother Joseph and the two made their future plans. Herod divided his following, keeping with him only his immediate family and intimates whom Josephus numbers as eight hundred.¹⁹ These he left at the fortress of Masada while he fled to Petra in Arabia.

Herod had wisely fled from Jerusalem for when dawn came, the Parthians completely destroyed Jerusalem and the surrounding territory. Thus Antigonus declared himself king, and held Hyrcanus and Phasaël as his prisoners. Fearing that Hyrcanus might escape and attempt to regain his kingdom by some means, Antigonus had his ears cut off. This is of great significance because the Jewish law required that their priests be "without blemish" as to all the parts of their body.²⁰ Thus Antigonus took care that Hyrcanus could never again function in his former office. Phasaël, realizing that a similar fate awaited him—even an ignominious death—"dashed his head against a great stone, and thereby took his own life, which he thought to be the best thing

18. Jos. Ant., xiv, 13.

19. Ibid.

20. Cf. Lev. 21, 17-24

he could do in such a distress as he was in."²¹

As for Herod, he sought a loan of money from Malchus, the king of Arabia, as a ransom for his brother, not knowing of his death. Despite the former favors which Herod had rendered this Arabian chieftan, his request was denied and Herod fled to Egypt, having learned of his brother's fate in the meanwhile. After being detained somewhat in Alexandria by Cleopatra, he set sail for Rome on a turbulent sea. He met Marc Antony at Rhodes to whom he explained his sorry plight. Being reminded of his former friendship with Antipater, and because of his hatred for Antigonus for his alliance with the Parthians, Antony did not turn a deaf ear to Herod's pleas. Neither was Antony immune to bribes of money which Herod offered him if he would make him king of Judea. Thus Antony introduced Herod into the Senate and "informed the Roman senators that it was to their advantage in the Parthian War that Herod should be king."²² Thus it was decreed in the year 40 B.C.

Herod had not hoped for this honor, Josephus tells us, but rather had planned to ask that Aristobulus III, the brother of his wife Mariamne, be made king. Previously, however, Josephus relates that Herod had offered Antony money for this title and so the idea was not altogether foreign to his thinking.²³

By this official decree, Herod became the lawful king of Judea, but it was three years before he had conquered his realm. Immediately upon his arrival at Ptolemais in the spring of 39 B.C., he began the arduous task of conquest. He quickly mustered a following and was reinforced with some Roman auxiliaries. With these troops he took Joppa, overran Galilee, meanwhile released his family from the fortress

21. Jos. Ant., xiv, 13, 10.

22. Jos. Ant., xiv, 14, 4.

23. Ibid.

at Masada, and marched on Jerusalem. On his arrival, he caused to be proclaimed throughout the city, "that he came for the good of the people, and for the preservation of the city, and not to bear any old grudge at even his most open enemies, but ready to forget the offences which his greatest adversaries had done him."²⁴ But Antigonus, in reply, caused to be proclaimed, "that they would not do justly, if they gave the kingdom to Herod, who was no more than a private man, and an Idumean, i. e., a half-Jew whereas they ought to bestow it on one of the royal family, as their custom was."²⁵

Meanwhile Herod's Roman auxiliaries broke up the siege of Jerusalem by retiring into winter quarters. Herod was unable to invade Judea alone but occupied himself with restoring order in Galilee. The next year the campaign was resumed against Antigonus. Herod appealed to Antony for additional military aid and succeeded in getting him to dispatch Sosius to his assistance. When Herod returned from his meeting with Antony he found his brother, Joseph, had been slain and that Antigonus had ordered his head cut off. Herod avenged this act by capturing Pappus, a general of Antigonus, and sent his head to his younger brother Pheroras.²⁶

The siege of Jerusalem was now renewed and lasted for more than half a year. Finally, Herod took the city, but Antigonus and his followers barricaded themselves within the Temple walls and the upper part of the city of Jerusalem. When they were finally overcome, thousands were unmercifully slain as a result of their long protracted and obstinate resistance. Sosius and his army set about to plunder the city. It

24. Jos. Ant., xiv, 15, 2.

25. Ibid.

26. Jos. Ant., xiv, 15, 10 & 13.

was only upon a plea from Herod himself that they left any part of the city standing. As for Antigonus, he was humiliated by Sosius who referred to him as Antigone, i. e., a woman, and was carried away in bonds. Herod later gave Antony a large sum of money by which means he persuaded him to have Antigonus slain. With his death, the government of the Asmoneans ceased and Herod became the actual king of Judea, three years after having been declared so by the Roman Senate.²⁷

27. Jos. Ant., xiv, 16, 4.

B. The Rule of Herod the Great

As we begin the unfolding of Herod's reign, it will be well to keep in mind the two guiding principles of his entire career: "the safeguarding of his own supremacy and the strengthening of the favor of the Romans."¹ His line of action was clearly marked out for him by the situation of affairs. He had to cling to the Romans as a support against the ill-will of his people, and meet this ill-will by apparent concession, or control it by unrelenting severity.

Immediately upon his capture of the city of Jerusalem, Herod had forty of the leaders of the Antigonean party put to death. He used their wealth as spoils of war and gave it to Antony that he might keep the favor of Rome. Next he began his policy of eliminating all possible pretenders to the throne. He realized that he was hated by his subjects and that the Asmoneans, who had many followers among the Jews, were a detriment to his future power. He succeeded in arousing their anger by his appointment of an obscure Babylonian, by the name of Ananelus, to the high priesthood. Hyrcanus could no longer hold this office after he returned from Galilee because of his mutilation. Alexandra, the mother of Queen Mariamne, was greatly offended by this appointment by Herod, for she was ambitious for her son, Aristobulus III, to have this honor, and based her claim on his royal descent.² She wrote of her grievance to Cleopatra in Egypt, that she might intercede for her with Antony and thus bring pressure to bear on Herod. She also sent

1. James Riggs, A History of the Jewish People, p. 180.

2. Jos. Ant., xv, 2, 1-5.

pictures of Mariamne and Aristobulus III to Antony of whom Josephus writes that they were very fair to look upon. This was done at the instigation of Dellius, a friend of Antony, who assured Alexandra that if Antony saw these pictures he would grant her request. Josephus claims that this whole plot of Dellius was odious throughout. Antony seems to have had a perverted mind in his relation with women, and it was to this perversion that Dellius made his appeal. However, we are told that Antony feared the jealousy of Cleopatra and the hatred of Herod, should he become involved in an open scandal, and, therefore, wrote Herod to comply with the request of Alexandra if at all possible. This request of Antony and the constant pleadings of Mariamne finally resulted in the deposition of Ananelus and the appointment of Aristobulus III in his stead. By this very act Herod broke two laws of the Jews—he had no right to depose a high priest and Aristobulus was but seventeen years old at the time and not eligible for the priesthood.³

Herod now feared that Alexandra and her son were a threat to his power and, therefore, had Alexandra watched and commanded her to remain within the palace and not to meddle into public affairs. She bore this restraint for a while but soon became so incensed that she planned an escape with her son into Egypt by means of two coffins. But this plot was discovered by one of Herod's guards. Herod still refrained from any physical violence but bided his time. He became even more leary of these two when Aristobulus was received so warmly by the people as he functioned in his office as high priest at the Feast of Tabernacles. Therefore, he arranged to have Aristobulus drowned while bathing at a feast held by him in Jericho.⁴

3. Jos. Ant., xv, 2, 6-7.

4. Jos. Ant., xv, 3, 3.

Alexandra uncovered the plot of her son's murder and again sought the aid of Cleopatra who succeeded in getting Antony to summon Herod to give an account of this death. Cleopatra was very anxious to have Herod deposed for she had a desire to gain possession of Judea. Herod realized that the good will of Antony and of the Romans was indangered, but, by an artful address and lavish gifts, he succeeded once more in winning the favor of Antony. Herod returned to Judea triumphant. To satisfy Cleopatra, Antony gave her Celesyria and the region about Jericho, famous for its palm trees and balsams, which Herod was forced to lease from her⁵ because their produce had become an important article of trade.⁶

Before Herod had gone to appear before Antony he had intrusted the care of his wife, Mariamme, to his uncle Joseph, a procurator of his government, and made a clandestine agreement with him that if Antony should kill him, he, in turn, should kill Mariamme. Herod was extremely jealous of Mariamme because of her great beauty. During the absence of Herod, Alexandra and Mariamme wrested this secret from Joseph during the course of a conversation in which Joseph was relating Herod's great love for Mariamme. Believing that she was now marked for death, Mariamme planned an escape with Alexandra to the Romans when it was rumored Herod had been killed. But these reports were countered by letters from Herod and the women abandoned the idea of flight. But Herod's sister, Salome, a very treacherous and jealous woman, reported all of these happenings to Herod upon his return. She also intimated that Joseph had had illicit relations with Mariamme but Mariamme successfully vindicated herself of these false accusations and later reproached

5. Jos. Ant., xv, 3, 8.

6. Henry Hart Milman, The History of the Jews, Vol. I, p. 397.

Herod for having made his secret agreement with Joseph. Herod took this revelation of his secret agreement with Joseph as a proof of Salome's accusation. He had Joseph killed immediately, but because of consuming love for Mariamne, spared her such a fate and was eventually reconciled to her.⁷

A short time after this incident, he found himself engaged in a war with the king of Arabia to regain the tribute money which he had been paying Cleopatra for this ruler. Herod and this Arabian chieftan were forced to pay Cleopatra tribute for the use of land in Calesyria which Antony had given to Cleopatra. The Arabian king had failed to relay his share of the tribute money to Herod which Herod had been paying from his own treasury on the promise of this king to pay. At the same time a great crisis was at hand which was to affect the entire Roman Empire. Octavius and Antony were at war. Herod hastened to assist Antony but was ordered to continue his war with the Arabian king, upon the instigation of Cleopatra. In this way, she hoped to see Herod defeated and herself come into possession of his kingdom. However, this plan proved Herod's salvation in the future happenings of the Empire as he had no part in the great war between the eastern and the western world. At first the tides of battle with the Arabian king were against Herod and he lost heavily. Simultaneous with these heavy losses in battle, an earthquake struck Jerusalem and claimed the lives of some ten thousand Jews. However, Herod finally was victorious in the war with the Arabs.⁸

While Herod successfully defeated his enemy, Antony lost in the battle at Actium in 31 B.C. and Octavius became head of the Roman Empire. Herod immediately set about to shift his allegiance to Octavius (Caesar

7. Jos. Ant., xv, 3, 7-9.

8. Jos. Ant., xv, 5, 2.

Augustus). He fully realized his precarious position because of his friendship with Antony. To further strengthen his hold on his own kingdom, he had the aged Hyrcanus, the last of the Asmoneans, put to death. He did this by securing documents which accused Hyrcanus of having been persuaded by Alexandra to enter into treasonable correspondence with the Arabian king. Thus one more threat to his power was eliminated. This done, he turned the government over to his brother, Pheroras, and sent his family to the fortress at Masada. Once again he gave the command to Soëmus of Ituria and Joseph, his treasurer, to kill Mariamne in the event of his death.⁹

Herod then came with haste to Rhodes and appeared before Octavius with all the dignity of an independent sovereign. The historian, Milman, writes:

He addressed Octavius in a speech, which, disdaining apology, enlarged on his obligations, and avowed his attachment to Antony. He declared that, as a friend, he had given him the best advice; such advice as might have made him again formidable to Caesar; he had begged him to put Cleopatra to death, and vigorously resume the war. "Antony" he pursued, "adopted a counsel more fatal to himself, more advantageous to you. If, then, attachment to Antony be a crime, I plead guilty; but if, having thus seen how steady and faithful I am in my friendships, you determine to bind me to your fortunes by gratitude, depend upon the same firmness and fidelity."¹⁰

By this speech Herod won the favor of Octavius and returned with even greater prestige and was given Gadara, Hippos, and Samaria to add to his kingdom, as well as some maritime cities.¹¹

But domestic troubles dampened his high spirits of joy and pride over his marvelous good fortune. Mariamne had again learned from her guardians that Herod had left the order to kill her in the event of his

9. Jos. Ant., xv, 6, 5.
 10. Op. cit., p. 412.
 11. Jos. Ant., xv, 7, 3.

death. She was in constant fear for her life, and, as a result, she treated Herod with cold indifference upon his return. This greatly incensed Herod and the intriguing Salome also inflamed this resentment in her brother by getting the king's cupbearer to accuse Mariamne of having bribed him to administer a "poisonous philtre" to his master. As a result, Herod put Mariamne's favorite eunuch to the rack in whom Mariamne confided all her secrets. He denied any knowledge of the poison, but in his anguish of pain revealed that his mistress' indifference was the result of the information she had received from Soëmus. Herod became enraged and had Soëmus put to death and Mariamne tried before the Sanhedrin. This body quickly passed the death sentence in the fear of rendering any other verdict which shows Herod's autocratic power even over this judicial body. Herod had intended to let Mariamne languish in prison and eventually release her, but through the treachery of Salome and his mother, he finally gave the order for her execution.¹²

As Mariamne went to her death, with all the calmness and regal dignity of her office, her mother reproached her for being so ungrateful to her husband and cried out that she deserved the fate that befell her. By this means Alexandra hoped to ingratiate herself into the favor of Herod lest she suffer a similar fate.

So great was Herod's love for Mariamne that when she was dead he fell into violent remorse and despair. He did everything possible to divert his mind from her memory, but to no avail. Josephus relates that he would have his servants call for her, feign hunting trips that he might go into the desert places to give way to his grief. He gave every evidence of being temporarily deranged in his mind. While in

12. Jos. Ant., xiv, 7, 9.

Samaria, on such a trip, he fell into a dangerous distemper, until the disorder of his mind brought on the disorder of his body, and he was seized with violent inflammation and pains in the back of his head.

While Herod was in this condition in Samaria, Alexandra again began her intrigues to gain possession of several of the fortified places, but her plot was discovered and Herod gave the order for her execution. Eventually Herod was able to rid himself of this distemper but it left an indelible gloom on his mind and he became even more cruel and blood-thirsty.

Herod now diverted his mind by turning all of his energy into the building and beautifying of his kingdom. In working out a plan of Hellenization, in accordance with an even more extensive plan of the emperor in unifying his empire, this period became known as an "Augustan age in Judea upon a small scale."¹³ His court assumed a Hellenistic character from the chancellor, Ptolemy, who "was a great director of affairs of his kingdom" down to numerous minor officials.¹⁴ So, too, the structure of Herod's army was Hellenistic and composed of mercenaries. The Palestinian Jews were usually shut out as being disloyal. The majority of the soldiers were Idumeans, Celts, Thracians, and citizens of various Greek cities.¹⁵

Herod built cities and a large number of civic buildings, many of which were offensive to the Jews because of the heathenish acts connected with them. In this way, he incurred the wrath of many of his subjects and many even threatened his life. As a precautionary measure, Herod proceeded to build fortresses throughout his territory. In addition, he covered the land with a network of spies. Herod, himself, is said

13. Riggs, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

14. *Jos. Ant.*, xvi, 7, 2.

15. *Gr. The Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. X, pp. 326-237.

to have mingled with his subjects, incognito, spying out those who were undermining his rule.¹⁶

It was during this period that he also rebuilt the Temple and a strong and beautiful palace on the hill of Zion, as well as the port city of Caesarea—a truly Grecian city. He undoubtedly chose the maritime situation for this city for the advantage of commerce.

Such a policy of Hellenization must have been extremely expensive to finance and must have fallen largely upon the Jews in the form of heavy taxation. However, a large share of the money required for this project no doubt came from the nobles and more wealthy families who suffered confiscation of their property at the hands of Herod during his rise to power. On the other hand, the public works undertaken all over the kingdom must have given employment to many Jews.

Milman, the historian, writes that Herod, "instead of head of the Hebrew religious republic became more and more on a level with the other vassal kings of Rome."¹⁷ He even had his sons, Aristobulus and Alexander, educated in Rome. It was at this time, writes Josephus, that Herod "arrived at the pitch of felicity, that whereas there were but two men that governed the vast Roman Empire, first Caesar, and then Agrippa, who was his principal favorite, Caesar preferred no one to Herod besides Agrippa, and Agrippa made no one his greater friend than Herod besides Caesar."¹⁸ And Caesar kept adding to the domain of Herod so that he became ruler over more territory than any previous Jewish king.

Looking at the economic condition at the time of Herod we have a picture which is more or less indicative of the entire Roman period.

16. Jos. Ant., xv, 10, 4.

17. Op. cit., p. 418.

18. Jos. Ant., xv, 10, 3.

Along the narrow streets of the larger cities, such as Jerusalem, there were endless rows of shops. Here were to be found the tailor, the shoemaker, the dyer, the carpenter, the butcher, the wool-comber, and the flax spinner. Then there were the more skilled craftsmen, such as the goldsmith and jeweler, the designer, and artificers in iron and brass. In these streets everything could be purchased—the production of Palestine itself, or products imported from foreign lands. Imports consisted in the finest precious metals, glass, silks, fine linen, woolen materials, purple, as well as special ointments and perfumes which were made accessible to the more wealthy of the Jews. "In short," says Edersheim, "what India, Persia, Arabia, Media, Egypt, Italy, Greece, and even the far off land of the Gentiles yielded, might be had in these bazaars."¹⁹

Edersheim continues a description of the economic life in Jerusalem, saying:

Ancient Jewish writings enable us to identify no fewer than 118 different articles of import from foreign lands, covering more than even modern luxury has devised. Articles of luxury, especially from abroad, fetched indeed enormous prices; and a lady might spend 36 l. on a cloak; silk would be paid by its weight in gold; purple wool at 3 l. 5 s. the pound, or, if double-dyed, at almost ten times that amount; while the price of the best balsam and nard was more exorbitant. On the other hand, the cost of common living was very low. In the bazaars you might get a complete suit for your slave for eighteen or nineteen shillings, and a tolerable outfit for yourself from 3 l. to 6 l. For the same sum you might purchase an ass, an ox, or a cow, and, for little more, a horse. A calf might be had for less than fifteen shillings, a goat for five or six. Sheep were dearer, and fetched from four to fifteen or sixteen shillings, while a lamb might sometimes be had as low as two pence. No wonder living and labor were so cheap. Corn of all kinds, fruit, wine, and oil, cost very little. Meat was about a penny a pound; a man might get himself a small, of course unfurnished, lodging for about sixpence a week. A day laborer was paid about 7½ d. a day, though skilled labor would fetch a good deal more.²⁰

19. Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Vol. I, p. 116.

20. Ibid.

He interjects some personal judgments and continues:

In Jerusalem must have been many of the large warehouses for the near commercial harbor of Joppa; and thence, as from the industrial centers of busy Galilee, would the pedlar go forth to carry his wares over the land. . . . Thither would Galilee send not only its manufactures, but its provisions: fish (fresh or salted), fruit known for its lusciousness, oil, grape-syrup, and wine.²¹

Foreign trade and commerce were more or less limited because of the old feeling in Palestine that the Jews were not to mingle with those outside their chosen race. Josephus expresses the views of his countrymen when he writes: "As for ourselves we neither inhabit a maritime country, nor do we delight in merchandise, no in such a mixture with other men as arises from it; but the cities we dwell in are remote from the sea, and having a fruitful country for our habitation, we take pains in cultivating that only."²²

This feeling, however, was modified with the changing circumstances of the people, and commerce was carried on quite extensively, but always under strict regulations and in accordance with Jewish law. Edersheim lists some of the Palestinian exports, such as: wheat, oil, balsam, honey, figs, etc., stating that the value of exports and imports were nearly equal, and the balance, if any, in favor of Palestine.²³

But despite the growing prestige and political power of Herod, domestic tragedy again raised its head to darken his declining years. He brought his two sons home from their stay in Rome who quickly raised the antagonism of the envious Salome because they were so warmly received by the multitude. She set about to undermine their favor with Herod by having it rumored about that they disliked their father be-

21. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

22. Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1, 12, quoted in Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, p. 205.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 209.

cause he had put their mother to death and that they planned to be her future avengers. Being of a very suspicious nature, it was not long before Herod's love for his two sons began to turn to hate. Nevertheless, he played the role of a father and married Aristobulus to Bernice, a daughter of Salome, his sister, and Alexander to Glaphyra, the daughter of Archelaus, king of Capadocia.²⁴ But these rumors persisted and became more pronounced and as a consequence gained more credence with Herod.

To make these two sons more subservient to him, Herod devised a plan to elevate another son, Antipater, born to him by Doris. This son was of the same character as Salome and lost no time in alienating the affections of his father from Aristobulus and Alexander. Since Herod was given permission by Rome to bequeath his crown to whichever of his sons he might choose, Antipater fell in league with every sinister plan of Salome and Pheroras to eventually do away with Aristobulus and Alexander, as they had their mother, Mariamme, in the hope that he would become his father's choice as his successor. Herod sent Antipater to Rome to become acquainted with Roman court life and diplomacy. From here, Antipater continued to inflame Herod's anger against his two sons to such a pitch that he sent them before the tribunal of Augustus. There Herod unjustly accused them, but by their mild manner of defense and speaking, they succeeded in winning the heart of Augustus, who reconciled them to their father. Upon their return to Judea, Herod made a speech to the people concerning his trip to Rome "and informed them that his sons were to reign after him: Antipater, first, and then Alexander and Aristobulus, the sons of

24. Jos. Ant., xvi, 1, 2.

Mariamme; but he desired at present they should all have regard to himself, and esteem him king and lord of all."²⁵

Peace again reigned within Herod's realm but for a short time for eventually dissensions broke out anew within the royal family. Herod's brother, Pheroras, defied him in a marriage to one of his daughters because of a female slave. Pheroras further convinced Alexander that Herod was secretly in love with his wife, Glaphyra. She, in turn, hated Bernice, the wife of Aristobulus and the daughter of Salome, because she was equal, if not superior to her because of her marriage. Alexander openly questioned his father on this charge of Pheroras who, in turn, shifted the blame to Salome, and thus domestic intrigue continued. New plots were uncovered each day involving the sons of Mariamme, with Antipater, Pheroras and Salome as the instigators of everyone of them. Milman lists some of their various plots in the following extract:

Sometimes with perverting the eunuchs who held the chief offices about the royal person, from whom they were said to have discovered the secret and feminine artifices which Herod used, to disguise the advance of old age; sometimes with designing the death of their father; or with a design of flying to Rome, or as accusing their father at Rome of entering into treasonable correspondence with the Parthians.²⁶

There was no one who escaped suspicion and Alexander was eventually thrown into chains. In this restraint he wrote letters of revenge in which he perpetrated the worst possible treason against Herod, but involved Pheroras, Antipater, and Salome and all the most influential ministers to the king. As a result, Herod became completely distracted and had persons of all ranks killed daily. Some semblance of peace was again restored when Alexander's father-in-law, the king of Capadocia,

25. Jos. Ant., xvi, 4, 2-6.

26. Op. cit., p. 422.

very craftily reconciled Herod to his son.²⁷

As soon as this internal strife was quelled, foreign disturbances demanded Herod's entire attention. He had to wage a war against the Nabateans, only to return to hear more accusations from Pheroras, Antipater, and Salome—all of whom hated one another and seemed to be plotting the doom of the family of Herod. Once more Herod accused his sons before Caesar's tribunal, and this time with such intensity that they were eventually condemned to death without the right of defense. They were later strangled at Sebaste (Samaria).²⁸

This crime did not remain unavenged for long. Upon the death of Pheroras, Herod discovered a plot of his and Antipater to poison him in order to accelerate Antipater's ascent to the throne. Herod recalled Antipater from Rome immediately and had him tried before Varus, the new president of Syria. The proof of his guilt was full and conclusive and Antipater was condemned to imprisonment to await the sentence of Augustus.

Herod, now a man of seventy, and inflicted with a fatal malady, bequeathed his kingdom to Antipas, his son by Malthace, passing over Archelaus and Philip because they were supposed to have been implicated in the conspiracy with Antipater. Josephus describes Herod's illness as follows:

A fire glowed in him slowly, which did not so much appear to the touch outwardly, as it augmented his pains inwardly; for it brought upon him a vehement appetite to eating, which he could not avoid to supply with one sort of food or other. His entrails were also exulcerated, and the chief violence of his pain lay on his colon; an aqueous and transparent liquor also had settled itself about his feet, and a like matter afflicted him at the bottom of his belly.

27. Jos., Ant., xvi, 7, 6.

28. Jos., Ant., xvi, 11, 7.

Nay, further, his privy-member was putrified, and produced worms; and when he sat upright, he had a difficulty of breathing, which was very loathsome, on account of the stench of his breath, and the quickness of its returns; he had also convulsions in all parts of his body, which increased his strength to an insufferable degree.²⁹

Thus Herod suffered untold agonies in the latter years of his life as a judgment of God for the atrocities which he had perpetrated during his lifetime. But the end of these crimes was not yet.

Realizing his death was imminent, he made arrangements with Salome and her present husband, Alexas, to have all the principal leaders of his realm whom he had called to Jerusalem locked within the hippodrome. Upon the proclamation of his death, the command was to be given that all within were to be slaughtered by the surrounding guards. In this way, he hoped to have the land in a general mourning upon his death. This command, however, was never carried out for Salome and Alexas had these people released upon Herod's death.³⁰

The last official act of Herod was to give the order for Antipater's execution when he learned that he had bribed his jailer to set him free, when it was rumored that Herod had taken his own life. It was only five days after this decree that Herod died at Jericho in 4 B.C., after a reign of thirty-four years. During these five days, he revised his will, appointing Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea; Philip, tetrarch of Gaulonitis and Trachonitis and Paneas; left the kingdom to Archelaus; and bequeathed the cities of Jamnia, Ashdod, and Phasailis to Salome, along with a handsome bequest of money for her and Caesar.³¹

29. Jos. Ant., xvii, 6, 5.

30. Jos. Ant., xvii, 6, 5 and 8, 2.

31. Jos. Ant., xvii, 8, 2.

It was during the latter days of Herod's life that the greatest event in all history took place within his realm—the birth of the Savior in Bethlehem of Judea. When this birth was announced to Herod and he was informed that the Savior was to be called a King, believing this to be a reference to an earthly kingdom, sought to rid himself of this possible pretender to his throne through what has become to be known as "The Murder of the Innocents," which, as Milman writes, passed away unnoticed. "The murder of a few children, in a small village near Jerusalem, would excite little sensation among such a succession of dreadful events, except among the immediate sufferers."³²

Thus passed in history one of the boldest and most blood-thirsty tyrants of ancient times. The historian, Schurer,["] characterizes his reign as follows:

The end of Herod the Great's reign was bloody as its beginning had been. The brighter portion lay in the middle. But even during his better days he was a despot, and upon the whole, with all the glory of his reign "he was still only a common man." The title of "the Great" by which we are accustomed to distinguish him from his more feeble descendants of the same time, is only justified when it is used in this relative sense.³³

The historian, Riggs, writes:

His long, eventful reign was a complex of brilliant achievements and fearful crimes. His hands were never free from the stain of blood, and yet those hands made Jerusalem glorious in the architecture of palace and temple, and changed the face of the land by many costly improvements.³⁴

An ancient fragment in Jewish literature, written probably a short time after Herod's death also summarizes Herod's reign in the form of a prophetic statement. After pronouncing sentence of condemnation on the Maccabees for their impiety which brought about Herod's usurpa-

32. Op. cit., p. 428.

33. Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 467.

34. Op. cit., p. 179

tion of their rule, a writer under the pseudonym of Moses states:

An insolent king shall succeed them who is not of the race of the priests—a daring and godless man. And he shall judge them as they deserve. He will extirpate their eminent men with the sword, and will bury their bodies in unknown places, so that no man shall know where their bodies are. He will kill the aged and the young and not spare. Then shall a great fear of him be among them in their land, and he shall execute judgment among them as the Egyptians did among them, and shall chastise them for thirty or forty years. And he will beget sons who as his successors shall rule a shorter time.³⁵

It is to these successors that we shall now turn, for it was during their reign that Christ and His disciples walked this earth.

35. W. D. Morrison, The Jews Under Roman Rule, p. 196.

C. The Immediate Successors to Herod the Great

During his lifetime, Herod had taken unto himself ten wives, most of whom hardly have a part in history other than that they bore him sons and daughters, some of whom were destined to play important roles in the future history of the Jews during the time of Christ and His Apostles. The first of these was Doris, the mother of Antipater, who was still alive at the time that Antipater's conspiracy was discovered, and as a suspected accomplice, was dispoiled of her great wealth.¹ The second was Mariamne, the Asmonean princess, who, together with her sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, fell victims to Herod's jealousy. The third wife of Herod was another Mariamne, the daughter of Simon the high priest, the mother of Herod Philip. The fourth and fifth were nieces, whose names history fails to record and who bore Herod no children. The sixth was Malthace, a Samaritan, who was the mother of Archelaus and Herod Antipas who received the greater share of Herod's dominion. The seventh, Cleopatra of Jerusalem, was the mother of Philip, the tetrarch of Trachonitis. The eighth was Pellas; the ninth Phaedra; and the tenth Roxana, one of whom figure largely in the following history, though each bore Herod a child. The issue of these wives is not given in detail, but only those are mentioned who have a part in Herod's succession.² We shall now trace this succession.

Archelaus was designated as Herod's successor, and he immediately assumed control of affairs in Jerusalem, although he had to await the official sanction of Rome before he could lay a valid claim to the

1. Jos. Ant., xvii, 4, 2.

2. Millman, op. cit., p. 431.

throne. His first official act was to give his father a royal burial with much pomp and display. Archelaus was received with great enthusiasm, but it was not long before the malcontents raised a sedition among the people and Archelaus was forced to resort to arms to suppress this rebellion, disrupting the Feast of the Passover which was being celebrated at the time.³ He then proceeded to Rome for the confirmation of his father's will by the emperor, but his right was contested by others of the Herodians. Antipas, upon the instigation of Salome, laid his claim for the government on the basis of Herod's former will in which he had been made the heir presumptive.

During these deliberations in Rome, insurrection again arose in Jerusalem as a result of a Syrian procurator, by the name of Sabinus, who attempted to steal the treasures of Herod's wealth. In the struggle which followed many Jews were killed, the city burned, and the Temple looted. The whole country was now in a state of anarchy, with small Jewish factions rising everywhere. After much plunder, the Syrian prefect, Varus, restored order.⁴

Following this restoration of peace in Palestine, the Jews sent a delegation to Caesar, "that they might petition for the liberty of living by their own laws," which meant that they wanted to be placed directly under Roman rule, without a monarch. Herod Philip also appeared, as if to espouse the cause of Archelaus, but at the same time to support his own claims. When the emperor had heard the demands of each claimant to the throne, his imperial edict confirmed, for the most part, the will of Herod. Archelaus was appointed ethnarch of Judea, Idumea, and Samaria, while the title of king was withheld as a

3. Jos. Ant., xvii, 9.

4. Jos. Ant., xvii, 10.

future reward. Herod Antipas obtained Galille and Perea; Philip—Auranitis, Trachonitis, Paneas, and Batanea. The Samaritans had one quarter of their tribute reduced, and Salome's bequest was confirmed in addition to receiving Jamnia, Azotus, Phasaelis, and a palace in Ascalon.⁵ What had been the empire of Herod was now parted into three territories, each of which had its own history for a while.

Little is actually known of the ethnarchy of Archelaus. The vast building enterprises of Herod had left a huge financial burden upon the civil government which of necessity brought about exorbitant taxation. This economic problem presented an immediate handicap to the reign of Archelaus, and became one of the main reasons for opposition to his rule. His reign is characterized as being carried out with great injustice and cruelty; nor could all of his useful and beautiful public works atone for his wickedness. He greatly incensed the Jews by marrying Glaphyra, the daughter of Archelaus of Cappadocia. She had been the wife of his brother, Alexander, and it was forbidden by Jewish law to marry a brother's wife if she had children by her first marriage.⁶ The Jews endured the barbarous and tyrannical rule of Archelaus for nine years, then sent a delegation to complain to the emperor. Augustus banished him to Vienne in Gaul and annexed his dominion to the province of Syria.⁷

Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, had a more successful reign than his brother, Archelaus, but his reign, too, ended in banishment. It is Herod Antipas to whom Jesus refers to as "that fox,"⁸ undoubtedly in reference to his sly character. He earned this title

5. Milman, *op. cit.*, p. 438 and *Jos. Ant.*, xvii, 12, 4 & 5.

6. *Jos. Ant.*, xvii, 13, 2.

7. Higgs, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

8. Cf. Luke 13, 32.

when Tiberius ascended the throne in 14 A.D., by currying the favor of this emperor in playing the spy on various Roman officials in the East.⁹

Herod Antipas' reign is remembered especially for his extensive building program. He rebuilt many of the cities in his territories and won even more favor from the emperor when he built the city of Tiberias in 26 A.D. In connection with populating this city, Antipas was forced to colonize it with many foreigners because an ancient burial site was unearthed during the laying of the foundations. This made the city unclean to the Jews. As a result, this city became another great Hellenizing center.

Herod Antipas made his lasting impression on history in connection with the death of John the Baptist, which revealed the ungovernable passions of the man. During a visit in Rome, he was entertained at the home of his half brother, Herod. There he became enamored with Herodias, his brother's wife, persuaded her to divorce her husband, and marry him. In carrying out this plan, Antipas also divorced his wife, the daughter of Aretas, an Arabian king. This godless transaction was condemned by John the Baptist and cost him his life, for Herodias had her daughter, Salome, demand his head as a reward for her daring at a bacchanalian festival celebration in the palace fortress of Machaerus.¹⁰

Not long after this, Aretas waged war upon Antipas as a result of the insult to his daughter in which Antipas was disastrously defeated. This, the people interpreted as God's judgment for the murder of John the Baptist. The conscience of the tetrarch was very sensitive

9. Jos. Ant., xviii, 4, 5.

10. Cf. Mark 6, 17-29 and Jos. Ant., xviii, 5, 2.

to this matter and when he heard of the work of Jesus he believed Him to be John the Baptist risen from the dead.¹¹ Because of this superstitious idea he used his influence with the Pharisees to persuade Jesus to leave Galilee.¹² And at the time of Christ's death, he refused to pass judgment on Him when Pilate referred His case to him.¹³

Meanwhile the emperor, Augustus, had died and Caligula had ascended the throne. Caligula was a close friend to Agrippa I, the brother of Herodias, and rewarded this friendship by giving Agrippa I the kingship of the territory formerly ruled by Philip, whose rule is outlined below. But Herodias became jealous of the power bestowed upon her brother and insisted that Antipas go to Rome and make a similar claim. Anticipating such a move, Agrippa I convinced Caligula of Antipas' disloyalty, for in "the arsenals of Galilee were found a stock of arms sufficient to equip seventy thousand men."¹⁴ When this was disclosed, Antipas was banished to Lyons in Gaul, in 39 A.D., and his wife, by choice, shared a like fate. His territory was likewise given to Agrippa I.

The last immediate heir of Herod the Great was Philip, the tetrarch of Iturea. He made his reign a blessing and maintained peace and goodwill for thirty-seven years in his territory. He made the interest of his people his own as is shown by a reference in Josephus, who relates that he was accustomed to travel about his dominions in the interest of peace and justice. He writes:

His tribunal also on which he sat in judgment, followed him in his progress; and when anyone met him who wanted his assistance, he made no delay, but had his tribunal set down immediately wherever he happened to be, and sat upon it and heard the complaint; he then ordered the guilty who were convicted to be punished, and absolved those who were accused unjustly.¹⁵

11. Cf. Matt. 14, 1.

12. Cf. Luke 23, 6-11.

13. Jos. Ant., xviii, 6, 10.

14. Riggs, op. cit., p. 239.

15. Jos. Ant., xviii, 4, 6.

He died after a quiet reign in 34 A.D., leaving no children. His dominions were added to the province of Syria and in 37 A.D. were given to Agrippa I by Caligula, as was mentioned above.

In addition to the power wielded by Herod and his successors, there existed simultaneously in Jerusalem a very powerful political institution which exercised a strong influence on the policies of the king. This was the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council, which was composed of the heads of the Sanhedrin, the great scholars and rabbis, and the judges who sat in Jerusalem.

It is impossible to say, with any certainty, what this council was like in existence. According to Jewish tradition, it was the origin of the time of Herod, and had been in existence since the time of the judges of Israel.¹ But there is no evidence for the continuity of such an assembly with functions similar to those of the Sanhedrin. Jewish writers that nothing in the Sanhedrin is to be compared with the council of the people or the court of justice in Jerusalem referred to in the Old Testament.² But the council was not an assembly like the Sanhedrin, and the events of justice did not pass through the Sanhedrin and administrative power like the Sanhedrin.³

The Sanhedrin with which we are concerned dates in all probability from the time of Antiochus the Great (223-187 B.C.) when the term (Sanhedrin) is referred to by Antiochus.⁴ Jerusalem came with the first Roman conquest of the kingdom in 63 B.C. and the Sanhedrin continued.⁵ At this time the Sanhedrin had suffered very much.

1. Matt. 23, 34.
2. Cf. I Kings 19, 12, and Gen. 22, 1-14.
3. Cf. Matt. 23, 34-35.
4. Cf. Matt. 23, 34.
5. Cf. Matt. 23, 34.

D. The Jewish Sanhedrin

In addition to the power wielded by Herod and his successors, there existed simultaneously in Jerusalem a very important judicial institution which exerted a strong influence on the political life of the Jews. About the time of Jesus, the priestly authority expressed itself through the Sanhedrin, the great ecclesiastical and civil council which sat in Jerusalem.

It is impossible to say, with any certainty, when this council came into existence. According to Jewish tradition, it has its origin at the time of Moses, when God told Moses to "assemble seventy men of the elders of Israel,"¹ but there is no evidence for the permanency of such an assembly with functions similar to those of the Sanhedrin. Morrison writes that neither is the Sanhedrin to be "confounded with the elders of the people or the court of justice at Jerusalem referred to in the Old Testament,"² for the elders were not an organized body like the Sanhedrin, and the courts of justice did not possess legislative and administrative powers like the Sanhedrin.³

The Sanhedrin with which we are concerned dates in all probability from the time of Antiochus the Great (223-187 B.C.) where the Senate (βουλευσις) is referred to by Josephus.⁴ Morrison says that the first faint traces of its existence do not go farther back than the Persian period.⁵ At this time the Jews had suffered many restrictions,

1. Cf. Num. 11, 16.

2. Cf. I Kings 8 ff. and Deut. 17, 8 ff.

3. Op. cit., pp. 209-210.

4. Jos. Ant., xii, 3, 3.

5. Op. cit., p. 210.

as also followed under the Greek and Romans, and so it was but natural that they felt the need of some organization to regulate their internal affairs. Ezra speaks of Elders⁶ and Nehemiah of nobles and rulers.⁷ As to the character of their organization, if any, we have no information, but it is not improbable that they formed some sort of council or similar organization. However, it is under Antiochus the Great that we have the first evidence of a definite organization—a senate or gerousia. Schürer characterizes it as an aristocratic body, presided over by the high priest with the priestly aristocracy dominating its proceedings.⁸

As the successors of Alexander the Great generally left the conquered people in control of their own local affairs, this would indicate that the Jewish senate was in possession of very extensive powers. Under the Maccabees, the senate still maintained a place in Jewish life, as already indicated in a reference to Josephus, but the autocratic tendencies of some of the Maccabean princes no doubt curtailed its authority considerably.⁹

There is every reason to believe that this Senate (γερονσία) was essentially the same institution as the Sanhedrin (συνηδριον) of the Roman period. Edersheim states: "The 'eldership' (γερονσία), which under the earlier Maccabees was called 'the tribunal of the Asmoneans,' now passed into the Sanhedrin."¹⁰

Pompey did not interfere with the Sanhedrin when he abolished the Maccabean monarchy in 63 B.C. However, Gabinius, Pompey's successor (57-55 B.C.), reorganized the whole government of the country during the time when Antigonus, the last of the Asmoneans, was making attempts

6. Cf. Ezra 5 & 9; 6, 7 & 14; 10, 8.

7. Cf. Neh. 2, 16; 5, 7; 7, 5.

8. Op. cit., Div. II, Vol. I, p. 174.

9. Morrison, op. cit., p. 210.

10. Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 97.

to gain the throne. He deprived the high priest of his royal authority, and established five independent sanhedrins, after the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. These sanhedrins sat in Jerusalem, Jericho, Gadara, Amathus, and Sepphoris. This form of government lasted but for a short time for it was discontinued when Julius Caesar re-invested Hyrcanus "with supreme dignity."¹¹ With this re-instatement of Hyrcanus, the Sanhedrin of Jerusalem again received its ancient powers and its jurisdiction once more extended over the whole of Palestine.

There is no definite information as to the exact number that composed this body nor how its membership was maintained. Guignebert quotes a tractate on the Sanhedrin in the Mishnah which supplies no satisfactory answer to these questions. He quotes:

"The Great Sanhedrin is composed of 71 members and the little Sanhedrin of 33.—How can you tell that the Great Sanhedrin should have 71 members?—It is written: Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel; and these, with Moses, make 71. Rabbi Jehuda is of the opinion that there should be only 70 (including Moses)." . . .

The Scriptural reference is to Numbers 11, 16. He continues:

It is not impossible that the Sanhedrin really did conform to this text by fixing its numbers at 70 or 71, though it is equally likely that the Talmudic Rabbis suppressed the real membership in favor of the sacred number. On ¹² the whole the statement of the Mishnah seems plausible.

The aristocratic character makes it probable that the members of the Sanhedrin were chosen for life, but that is a question to which no answer can be given. It appears that the new members were admitted by the laying on of hands, but no record remains of the qualifications necessary for membership.

We do know, says Guignebert, "that the members were not of equal

11. Milman, op. cit., pp. 399-400.

12. Op. cit., p. 52.

rank or privilege. The tractate called Sanhedrin makes the following statement:

"In cases where there is no question of a death sentence, anyone (i.e. any member) may give judgment, but in the trial of capital offences only priests, Levites and those Israelites who are qualified to ally themselves with a priestly family by marriage shall do so." Israelites thus qualified were those who were free from all taint of mixed marriage and could supply proof of a Jewish lineage that was both ancient and undefiled. As to the component elements of the council, both Josephus and the New Testament refer to High Priests (ἱερείς), Scribes (γραμματεῖς), and elders (ἐπὶ πρεσβυτέρους) as belonging to it. The primacy clearly belonged to the High Priests, who were sometimes given the significant title of (ἀρχιερεῖς)¹³ or chiefs. It is obvious that these men neither were, nor had been, all High Priests. The term (ἀρχιερεῖς) must have been used to designate any of the higher offices of the priesthood, and even members of those families qualified to fill them.¹⁴

For the pre-eminence of the high priest, we but need to turn to Scripture for proof. When Jesus was brought to trial at Jerusalem it was the high priest, Caiphas, who was head of the Sanhedrin which condemned Him. When St. Paul was later accused before the same council, it was the high priest, Ananias, who performed the functions of presiding judge.

At the head of the Sanhedrin, then, was the high priest while the other members belonged to the priestly aristocracy and the leaders among the Scribes, together with the elders, the men of years and experience who always filled a prominent place in Jewish affairs.¹⁵

The power of the Sanhedrin naturally varied with political circumstances, being at times almost absolute, while at other times having its powers limited only to ecclesiastical affairs. During the rise of Herod the Great, it possessed the ecclesiastical, administrative, legislative, and judicial powers as is shown by their calling Herod to

13. Cf. Acts. 4, 5.

14. Op. cit., pp. 52-53.

15. Cf. Mark 14, 53.

account for violating their special prerogative of condemning a criminal, when he had a number of bandits put to death who were infesting his province. It was because of this summons and trial by the Sanhedrin that Herod is supposed to have put the entire Sanhedrin to death, excepting Sameas, upon his elevation to the throne. If this is actually true, he must have created an entirely new Sanhedrin for it is mentioned again later in connection with the death of Hyrcanus.¹⁶

The power of the Sanhedrin was insignificant under Herod and Archelaus, but after their death its power again increased and the internal government was largely in its hands. This jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin continued in this way through the rule of the procurators until its dissolution. The procurators exerted a strong influence over this body in that they named and deposed high priests and reserved the right of calling the assembly together.

The Sanhedrin had practically no power or authority over the Roman citizens who may have settled in the territory of Judea. The only exception was when a Roman citizen had profaned the Temple. In that event, the Sanhedrin had the right to try such a citizen. Other than this, Roman citizens were subject to the jurisdiction of the Roman procurators, as in the case of Paul who was tried by Felix and later by Festus and ultimately in Caesar's court in Rome.¹⁷ That the Romans, in turn, granted the Jews the right to try religious offenders of their laws even outside of the territory of Judea is shown by Saul's (Paul's) commission from the high priest in Jerusalem to take proceedings against the Christians who lived in Damascus.¹⁸ Thus, while the Sanhedrin's powers were limited only to Judea in the secular spheres

16. Cf. Jos. Ant., xv, 2.

17. Cf. Acts 23, 24 and 25, 10.

18. Cf. Acts 9, 2; 22, 5; 26, 2.

of government, nevertheless, it continued to exert its influence upon all Jews in religious matters, wherever there were Jewish communities.

The Sanhedrin dealt with every problem that had any connection with religion, however remote. There were the offences dealt with by the Law, questions of marriage and divorce, heretical opinions, genealogies, the calendar, and all other matters of importance for the Jews. Even in cases where the Sanhedrin was not permitted to decide and which had to be referred to the Roman procurator, they were usually judged in accordance with Jewish law and tradition as a Roman concession to the Jews. The usual punishments were fines of money and corporal punishments. The capital punishments were stoning, burning, beheading, and strangulation.¹⁹

The Sanhedrin, however, was not permitted to pronounce the death sentence without the sanction of the Roman procurator. The biblical evidence for this is contained in the trial of Jesus when the Jews said to Pilate: "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."²⁰ Yet the Sanhedrin is chiefly referred to as a court of justice in the New Testament. Jesus and Stephen were both condemned by it as being guilty of blasphemy; Paul was charged before it as a transgressor of the Law; and Peter and John as false prophets and as being guilty of sedition.

Besides the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, there was a local sanhedrin in every town in Palestine, composed of seven judges. To these local sanhedrin all civil and criminal matters were taken and were referred to the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem only when the local judges could not give a unanimous decision in the interpretation of

¹⁹, Cf. Acts 7, 59; I Maccabees 3, 5; Mark 6, 27; and Jos. Wars, 1, 27, 6.
²⁰, Cf. John 28, 31.

the Law.²¹ Hausrath says that sittings were held on the market-days, the second and fifth days of the week—Monday and Thursday—that the country people might have an opportunity of appeal to these courts.²² The transactions took place in the synagogues and sentences were immediately carried out, e.g., when Jesus said: "Beware of men for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues,"²³ and it is in reference to their power to send men to prison that Jesus said: "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison."²⁴

In general, these Jewish courts of justice, particularly the Great Sanhedrin, were more powerful under the direct rule of Rome than under the Herods, for the Romans contented themselves with the political power and left the other power to the self-government of the people. The Sanhedrin existed as a Jewish institution until the Great War, when in 70 A.D. it was abolished in connection with Vespasian's policy of completely severing Palestine from its past.

21. Jos. Ant., iv, 8, 14.

22. Op. cit., p. 83.

23. Cf. Matt. 10, 17.

24. Cf. Matt. 5, 25.

E. The Rule of the Roman Procurators with the

Intermediate Reigns of Herod Agrippa I and Herod Agrippa II

The Judeans had asked for direct Roman rule at the time Archelaus was seeking the throne as his father's successor, and now with his banishment, this request was finally granted. Judea was placed under the rule of Roman procurators. The succession of these procurators was not continuous but was interrupted by the reign of Agrippa I, following the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate, while Agrippa II later ruled over certain sections of Palestine, simultaneously with the last group of Roman procurators. Those in the first series ruled over Judea alone and possessed the power of supervision over the Temple and the right to appoint and depose the high priests. Those in the second series ruled over Samaria and Galilee, besides Judea. In this period, supervision over the Temple and the high priests was exercised by Jewish princes of the Herodian dynasty.

In 27 B.C., Augustus divided the care of the Roman provinces with the Senate, retaining under his own direction those which were of a military importance, and sending out to them, as governors, men of senatorial rank. If among these provinces any one was difficult to manage by reason of the savage state of the people, or because of tenacious customs, an official of the equestrian rank was chosen to take charge of affairs. Syria, therefore, had a governor of high rank, who was known as a "legate" while Judea was of the exceptional class, and was supervised by a "procurator," who does not seem to have been entirely

independent of the legate of Syria.¹

Judea was, therefore, an imperial province and its headquarters were in Caesarea. The procurators had their residence here and came to Jerusalem during the festival seasons in order to maintain order. The prerogatives of these procurators were three: to command the military forces of the province; to act as judge in the more important judicial cases, and to collect taxes levied by the Roman government. As a military commander, the procurator maintained a force of provincial troops under his command with which to preserve order in his realm. These troops were garrisoned at numerous points, and in this way a Roman soldier was a familiar object in Judea.² The judicial functions of the procurators were almost entirely confined to cases of capital offenses; all minor cases were left to the jurisdiction of the local courts. Thus the Sanhedrin could try Jesus and determine His guilt, but the sanction of Pilate as the procurator was necessary for His execution as we have seen in the previous section.

As the administrator of the provinces, the procurator was in charge of the finance department. Whenever a new territory was conquered by the Romans it technically became the property of the Roman state. Some of this territory naturally became state property, Rome usually taking over those natural resources which they deemed necessary for their own economy. Aside from lands appropriated in this way, the remaining territory was given back to its original inhabitants on the condition that they pay rent for it. This rent was collected in the form of taxes.

In the time of Christ and His Apostles, payment of such taxes

1. Riggs, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

2. Cf. Luke 3, II.

was calculated on the producing value of a given area of land, the record of which was kept in the imperial record office. This was the reason why Caesar Augustus decreed that "all the world," that is the Roman world, "should be taxed,"³ which literally meant a register should be made. The order of Augustus was that a census should be taken throughout the provinces to record the population, property, trade, and any other information necessary for such imperial records upon which basis the taxes could be computed.

The revenue of Judea, as an imperial province, did not go to the treasury of the Senate but into the imperial treasury. Judea, therefore, in the strict sense paid its taxes "to Caesar."⁴ It was probably to facilitate the collection of these taxes that Judea was divided into eleven toparchies or districts.

From taxes, in the real sense, we distinguish the customs, that is duties on exported articles. These were imposed in all the Roman provinces. The collecting of these customs were leased out to individuals known as publicani, who then would collect these customs in a particular district for a fixed annual sum. Whatever they collected in excess of this sum was their profit and if they failed to collect the stipulated amount, they had to bear the loss. These lessees were not always Roman citizens, but were usually chosen from the native population, the outstanding examples being Matthew and Zaccheus who are referred to in the Gospels. Since the tariffs were more or less indefinite, opportunity was given for the arbitrariness and rapacity of the custom gatherers. Their excessive charges made them a class hated by the Jews.

The chief revenues of Rome were derived from the land-tax and poll-

3. Cf. Luke 2, 1 ff.

4. Cf. Matt. 22, 17 ff and Mark 12, 14 ff.

tax. These were collected directly through the administration of the procurators in provinces such as Palestine. The land-tax was used for the protection and policing of the province as well as for the administration of justice; the remainder naturally fell into the imperial treasury. Under the poll-tax, there fell various sorts of personal taxes, such as the income tax, and seems to have been more of a tax on occupations and trades.⁵ Over and above this taxation the Jews were obliged to pay religious revenues for the administration of the Temple and the support of the elaborate services. In addition, there were added revenues necessary to support the local synagogues. This vast accumulation of assessments made the burden of taxation intolerable, and an intensely acute question.

It was at the end of the reign of Archelaus that Augustus sent Cyrenius, a Roman senator, to Syria to be a governor in that province. and Coponius,⁶ of equestrian rank, as the procurator of the Jews in 6 A.D. That Judea was not independent of Syrian influence at this time is shown by the fact that Cyrenius himself came into Judea "to take an account of their substance" for the emperor.⁷ This is that same Cyrenius who under Saturnius had formerly registered the people, but now had the duty of taking a second census of property, as well as of persons, in order to regulate the taxation exacted by the Roman government from the subject provinces.⁸

This census caused a mild revolution and was claimed to be an act of enslavement of the people, because of Jewish sentiment over against this question of taxation. A certain Judas, a Gaulonite, led

5. For the section on Roman taxation, cf. Schürer, op. cit., pp. 60-71 and 107-111.

6. A.D. 6-9. I am following the chronology used by Schürer, op. cit., for the various procurators' terms of office.

7. Jos. Ant., xviii, 1, 1.

8. Millman, op. cit., p. 448.

his countrymen in a revolt. One violent uprising followed another and murders and robberies were numerous. Josephus tells us that this Judas also "excited a fourth philosophic sect among us, and had a great many followers therein, filled our civil government with tumults at present and laid the foundations of our future miseries, by this system of philosophy," and ultimately brought the Jewish state to destruction.⁹

The four philosophies to which Josephus refers are those of the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots which definitely influenced the political situation during this period. It is impossible to trace the history of each of these sects or parties among the Jews in great detail here for each involves a study in itself, but I shall digress from the sequence of events at this point and briefly define them, looking more at the political aspects of their philosophy.

Lagrange defines the Pharisees as "a fraternity boasting a unique acquaintance with the Law of God, both written and oral, and organized for the purpose of observing the Law with even greater exactitude, and of imposing it on others."¹⁰ They were nationalistic in tendency and were constantly agitating for the triumphant return of the Jewish state. This caused them to resist any form of Greek influence and to have an intense hatred for foreign overlords, for they were anxious to preserve their religion inviolate. Guigenbert says: "It is probably no exaggeration to say that they looked upon political independence primarily as the best means of realizing thier religious ideal."¹¹ This political philosophy would naturally make the Pharisees very unpopular with the established authorities.

The Sadducees were more conservative in their politics. They

9. Jos. Ant., xviii, 1, 1.

10. E. J. Lagrange, *Le Judaisme avant Jesus-Christ*, Paris, 1931, in Guigenbert, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

11. Guigenbert, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

maintained an attitude of cautious reserve towards anything new and readily upheld the existing order of government, whatever it was, as long as the religion of the Jews was respected and maintained as a whole, but even in this respect were often ready for compromise.¹²

The third group was that of the Essenes who emphasized a meticulous observance of the Law. They were more of a monastic group, numbering about four thousands men, according to Josephus.¹³ They lived celibant lives, apart from the rest of society and maintained an even more strict adherence to the Law than the Pharisees. Essenism seems to date from a time when Israel was subjected to strong foreign influences which would indicate their scrupulous adherence to the Law and their strong nationalistic feeling.

The Zealots, led by the aforementioned Judas, the Gaulonite, were the extreme nationalists and were interested in the independence and autonomy of the nation to the neglect of every other concern. Josephus says of this party that, on the whole, the members shared the religious teaching of the Pharisees but that they had an invincible love of liberty and "acknowledged no leader or master but God."¹⁴ Judas was probably not the founder of this party or thought among the Jews, but the establishment of direct Roman rule on Jewish territory brought nationalistic feeling in Palestine to such a point that many of the Jews naturally rallied to the cry of this man. The Romans dealt drastically with this uprising but the feelings and attitudes of this party persisted and gave rise to an intense fanaticism among the Jews. From this time onward, the Zealots increased in number and influence in hostility toward Rome. They employed such terrorist methods against the pro-

12. Guignebert, op. cit., p. 163.

13. Jos. Ant., xviii, 1, 5.

14. Jos. Ant., xviii, 1, 6.

Romanists as to openly stab them on the streets. Because of this they later received the name of Sicarii or assassins. This open hostility against Rome eventually precipitated the civil war under Florus in 66 A.D.

Coponius was succeeded by Marcus Ambivius¹⁵ during whose rule Salome, the sister of Herod the Great, died. He was succeeded by Annus Rufus¹⁶ who ruled when Caesar Augustus died and was succeeded by Tiberius. The latter pursued a different policy in regard to the provinces. During his reign of twenty-three years, Judea had only two procurators—Gratus and Pilate. He disliked the former policy of frequent changes in the governors. He said:

A rapid succession of rulers only increases the oppressions and exactions of the provinces. The governor who anticipates but a short harvest, makes the most of his time, and extorts as much as he is able in the short possible period. A governor who expects to remain longer in office, pillages on a more gradual, and therefore less oppressive system—it is even possible that his avarice may be satiated.¹⁷

Tiberius replaced Rufus with Valerius Gratus.¹⁸ He is remembered in Jewish history for his deposing of five successive high priests during his procuratorship.

The next of this series of procurators was Pontius Pilate¹⁹ of whom more information is available. Hatred of him and the Romans was greatly intensified when he introduced the effigies of Caesar upon the Roman standards of his soldiers when he brought his army into Jerusalem for winter quarters. So fanatical were the Jews in their protests to Pilate that Josephus tells us they threw themselves on the ground and with their necks bared, invited death rather than submit to such

15. Probably A.D. 9-12.

16. Probably A.D. 12-15.

17. Jos. Ant., xviii, 6, 5.

18. A.D. 15-26.

19. A.D. 26-36.

a profanation of Jerusalem.²⁰ Pilate finally yielded and had these effigies removed, but further incensed the Jews by robbing the Temple treasury to build an aqueduct. When a large crowd protested this action of Pilate, he sent forth a detachment of his soldiers and many lost their lives.

Then Pilate attempted to introduce votive shields, without figures, on which the name of the emperor appeared. He did this "less for the honor of Tiberius than for the annoyance of the Jewish people." But this, too, was offensive to the Jews because of their religious scruples. After several direct appeals to Pilate to have these removed failed, a delegation of distinguished men went directly to the emperor. Tiberius realized that Pilate had raised these shields more in a spirit of bravado than in honor to his name and, therefore, ordered them removed immediately.²¹

But the event of the greatest historical significance during the procuratorship of Pilate was the crucifixion of Christ. The trial of Jesus had created a great furor in Jerusalem which threatened to undermine Pilate's control of the province. His greatest concern was to maintain order in Judea and keep the favor of Rome. In an attempt to achieve this end and to avoid a decision in the case of Jesus, he sent Him to Herod Antipas, who was reigning as Pilate's contemporary in Galilee and who happened to be in Jerusalem at the time to celebrate the Passover Festival. But Herod Antipas only questioned Jesus and mocked Him and then sent Him again to Pilate.²² Finally, because of the increasing agitation, Pilate yielded to the clamor of the people against his own better judgment and condemned Jesus to death.

20. Jos. Ant., xviii, 3, 1.

21. Schürer, op. cit., Div. I, Vol. II, pp. 82-86.

22. Cf. Luke 23, 7-13.

The act that brought about Pilate's downfall took place in connection with a pilgrimage of a large number of Samaritans to Mount Gerizim to view some sacred utensils of the Temple that were supposed to have been buried there since the time of Moses and were now to be unearthed by a Samaritan pseudo-prophet. Pilate doubted their intentions and before they could complete their pilgrimage had many of them slain and the rest imprisoned as attempting to undermine his government. The Samaritans were wholly innocent of any revolutionary action, and, therefore, appealed directly to Vitellius, the legate of Syria at the time. Their complaints resulted in Pilate being summoned to Rome for an explanation of his conduct. But before he reached Rome to stand trial, Tiberius, the emperor, died and was succeeded by Caligula in 37 A.D.

The accession of Caligula to the throne made possible the restoration of an Herodian as the head of the Jewish province under Roman domination—Herod Agrippa I—the grandson of Herod the Great by his son Aristobulus.

Agrippa I was raised at the Roman court. Here he had become a close friend to Drusus, the son of Tiberius. But because of extravagant living, he was soon reduced to poverty after his mother's death. Drusus meanwhile died, and in his remorse, Tiberius refused to see any of his son's friends. For these reasons Agrippa was forced to leave Rome and went to Judea where he rapidly contracted more debts. In his despair he attempted to take his life but was restrained from doing so by his wife Cypros. She prevailed upon Herodias, the wife of Herod Philip, to come to the aid of her brother. Philip, therefore, gave the magistracy of the city of Tiberias to Agrippa. This solved Agrippa's

immediate problems but it was not long before trouble between these two Herods dissolved this arrangement. Agrippa then succeeded in ingratiating himself into the favor of Flaccus, the Syrian president of this period. This friendly relationship was of short duration, however, being ruptured by Agrippa's brother, Aristobulus, who uncovered a scheme of bribery in which Agrippa was involved.²³

By this time Agrippa was in dire straits. He tried to borrow money from different sources but was always refused because he lacked any security. Finally he was apprehended by his creditors but managed an escape to Alexandria. There, through the efforts of his wife, he was able to secure a loan and set sail for Italy. Here he was warmly received by Tiberius until an account of the evasion of his debts was relayed to this monarch. As a result, Agrippa was again forced to leave the emperor in disgrace and to retire to Rome. However, he was able to regain his favor by securing a loan of money from Antonia, the emperor's wife. It is at this time that Agrippa became a very intimate companion to Caius (Caligula), the grandson of Tiberius.

Agrippa fell into disfavor with the emperor again when he was overheard to have said to Caius, in a chariot driven by Eutychus, that he wished Tiberius would die soon that Caius might have the government. Sometime later Agrippa had occasion to accuse this same Eutychus of stealing some clothing. When he was apprehended, he retaliated by reporting to the emperor what Agrippa had said. As a result, Agrippa was imprisoned where he languished for six months until the death of Tiberius.²⁴ But as soon as Caligula was confirmed in his office as emperor, he appointed Agrippa I to be king of the tetrarchies of Philip

23. Jos. Ant., xviii, 6, 1-3.

24. Jos. Ant., xviii, 6, 10.

and Lysanias and sent Marullus to be procurator of Judea. When Agrippa succeeded in convincing Caligula of Herod Antipas' opposition to his government, as was mentioned above, Caligula banished Antipas and also gave his tetrarchy to Agrippa.²⁵

Upon Agrippa's arrival in Palestine he found the people rebellious because of a decree of Caligula that all of his subjects should worship his statue. This half-crazed emperor was convinced of his divinity and regarded any refusal to worship him as an evidence of personal hostility. When he found that the Jews were not carrying out his decree, he sent Petronius, the governor of Syria, with an army into Palestine. Great numbers of the Jews petitioned Petronius that he would not enforce this decree of the emperor and that he would make every effort to have it annulled in their territory. Agrippa himself summoned all of his resources to bring about a change. He returned to Rome and there prepared a great banquet in Caligula's honor. During the course of this banquet he ventured to ask Caligula to revoke this decree in Jewish territories. This Caligula granted as a special favor to his friend; and before new trouble could arise, Caligula was assassinated in 41 A.D.²⁶

During the confusion which followed over the Roman accession, Agrippa succeeded in helping Claudius to the throne and secured for him the good will of both the Roman army and senate. Claudius, in turn, rewarded Agrippa by adding Judea and Samaria to his dominion. Agrippa I was now king over all of the territory which his grandfather had ruled. Contrary to the indolent life that he had lived prior to his elevation as ruler over the Jews, he was generally well received by the Jews and his reign has been called the "golden day" for Judaism.²⁷

25. Jos. Ant., xviii, 6, 10.

26. Jos. Ant., xviii, 8, 7 & 8; xix, 1, 1-14.

27. Riggs, op. cit., p. 244.

In this connection, Josephus writes:

He loved to live continually at Jerusalem and was careful in the observance of the laws of his country. . . . He kept himself entirely pure; nor did any day pass over his head without its appointed sacrifice.²⁸

However, Agrippa I persecuted the early Christian Church, but the historian Riggs says that this "was part of his Jewish policy. It was because the murder of James 'pleased the Jews' that he tried to lay violent hands on Peter."²⁹

While Agrippa I was anxious to court the favor of his subjects, he was thoroughly imbued with Hellenism and provided his realm with many of the Greek amusements. When he had ruled for three years, he went to Caesarea to celebrate a festival in honor of the emperor. On the second day there he appeared all resplendent in a beautiful garment "made wholly of silver." When the sun shone on it, the people were filled with great awe and cried out: "Be thou merciful to us; for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as a superior to mortal nature." Josephus reports that even as he listened to these praises of the people he was seized with violent pains in his stomach and had to be carried into his palace where he died a few days later.³⁰

Herod left a son, Agrippa, junior, but the emperor was persuaded not to entrust so large a kingdom as that of Palestine to one so young. Agrippa, junior, was only seventeen at the time. Thus the rule of Palestine reverted back into the hands of the Roman procurators.

When we glance over the history of the Roman procurators, to whom the government of Palestine was entrusted once more, it is quite apparent that they conducted themselves in such a manner that they

28. Jos. Ant., xix, 7, 3.

29. Cf. Acts 7, 1-3.

30. Jos. Ant., xix, 9, 2.

aroused the people to revolt. None of them showed any consideration for the prejudices and peculiarities of the Jewish people over whom they governed, but suppressed any movement incompatible with the policy of Romanization of the province or their own political security.

The first in this new series of procurators was Cuspius Fadus.³¹ That this governor had no appreciation of the peculiar characteristics of the Jewish people is proven by his demand that the beautiful robes of the high priest should be committed to the care of the Romans which hindered the freedom of Jewish worship on festival days. The Jews immediately protested and through Agrippa, junior, who was in Rome, were able to get this order rescinded by the emperor. By such petty annoyances as these, Fadus succeeded in offending the sensitive feelings of the Jews.

During his procuratorship a certain false prophet, called Theudas, made the boast that he could part the waters of the Jordan as an evidence of his divine power and in this way hoped to gain a following among the Jews who would rebel against Rome. Fadus interrupted his plans by sending his troops against him, killing Theudas and many of his followers among the Jews.

At this time Herod of Chalcis petitioned Emperor Claudius for authority over the Temple and its treasury, as well as the choice of the high priests, and was granted this request. This authority was given to him and to his descendants until after the war. When Agrippa II later became king of Chalcis, he also assumed these special prerogatives.³²

Claudius now attempted to appease his Jewish subjects by having a Jew, Tiberius Alexander,³³ appointed in the stead of Fadus. He was

31. A.D. 44 - ?.

32. Jos. Ant., xx, 1, 3.

33. A.D. ? - 48.

a nephew of the great Philo but was also an apostate of the Jewish religion. As such, he was only an offense to the Jews, and an uprising of the Zealots reveals that his mission was a failure. It was during his procuratorship that James and Simon, sons of Judas the Gaulonite, who had attempted to disseminate the dangerous teachings of their father, were crucified. This only added more fire to the rebellious spirit abroad in the land. A severe famine within Palestine just at this time also served to aggravate this rebellious spirit still more.

Although the days of these first procurators did not pass without their troubles, they can be regarded as practically insignificant in comparison with the excitement and turmoil that followed.

Ventidius Cumanus³⁴ was sent to replace Alexander, during whose rule many were killed by the Roman legions in attempts to quell Jewish uprisings. Josephus estimates that some 20,000 Jews lost their lives when Cumanus released his troops upon a Jewish mob who protested against the indecent posture and exposure of a Roman soldier at the Feast of the Passover.³⁵ In retaliation, no doubt, a group of Jews attacked an imperial official by the name of Stephanus. As a punishment, Cumanus had all the surrounding villages in the neighborhood of the spot of the incident pillaged.

An even more bloody collision with the people occurred when a number of the Jews were slain by the Samaritans while en route through Samaritan territory to a Jewish festival. When the Samaritans bribed Cumanus for his favor, the Jews took revenge into their own hands. The Zealots led an attack against the Samaritans and took many innocent lives, including women and children. Cumanus quickly retaliated

³⁴ A.D. 48-52.

³⁵ Jos. Ant., xx, 5, 3.

by slaying many of the Jews. This last act cost him his governorship, as the Syrian legate, Quadratus, was appealed to and upon a personal investigation had Cumanus recalled to Rome to answer to the emperor for his conduct. Agrippa was still in Rome at the time and was instrumental in having the Emperor banish Cumanus.³⁶

At this time Claudius gave the tetrarchy of Philip and Batanea, and also Trachonitis and Abila to Agrippa II, but took the territory of Chalcis from him after he had governed it for four years.³⁷

Felix³⁸ was sent by Claudius in 52 A.D. to succeed Cumanus. Schürer says that this man's term of office no doubt constitutes the turning-point in the drama which opened with 44 A.D. and the procuratorship of Fadus, and reaching its close with the bloody conflicts of 70 A.D. Previous to his procuratorship there had been serious uprisings, but they were more or less isolated. Under his rule, rebellion became permanent.³⁹ Tacitus sums up his estimate of Felix by saying: "With all manner of cruelty and lust, he exercised royal functions in the spirit of a slave."⁴⁰

Because of the misgovernment of Felix, the Zealots won more and more sympathy among the ranks of the citizens. Felix sought to repress the movement of the Zealots and "the number of the robbers whom he caused to be crucified was incalculable, as also that of the citizens whom he arrested and punished as having been in league with them."⁴¹ Then the Sicarii, a still more fanatical faction of the patriots, came to the fore. Armed with sharp daggers (*sicae*), from which they received their name, they moved among the crowds, especially on festival days,

36. Jos. Ant., xx, 6, 1-3.

37. Jos. Ant., xx, 6-7, 1.

38. A.D. 52-60.

39. Op. cit., Vol. II, Div. I, p. 176.

40. Ibid.

41. Jos. Wars, ii, 13, 4.

and stabbed their opponents. As a result, there was little safety in Jerusalem.

Religious fanaticism also took hold of the people at this time and false prophets were able to gain large followings. Felix invariably would break up such crowds with the sword. The outstanding example of these fanatics was the Egyptian Jew referred to in Acts 21, 38, who claimed that at his word the walls of Jerusalem would fall to the ground. This armed restraint of Felix caused these fanatical groups to unite their cause with that of the Zealots and thus they presented a united resistance to Roman rule.

Josephus writes:

A company of deceivers and robbers got together, and persuaded the Jews to revolt, and exhorted them to assert their liberty, inflicting death on those that continued in obedience to the Roman government, and saying that such as willingly chose slavery ought to be forced from such their desired inclinations; for they parted themselves into different bodies, and lay in wait up and down the country, and plundered houses of the great men, and slew the men themselves, and set the villages on fire; and this till all Judea was filled with the effects of their madness. And thus the flame was every day more and more blown up, till it came to a direct war.⁴²

These fitful outbursts of robbery and insurrection which characterize this entire period leading up the Jewish War were in a large measure the result of the stress in economic affairs. The country was crowded with an excessive population. Even the permanent Jewish inhabitants were more than the land could adequately support, and when you add the Gentile immigrants which were brought in by the Herods and the Romans to colonize whole cities, as well as the Roman officials and military forces, it is obvious that there existed a serious economic

⁴². Jos. Wars, ii, 13, 6.

problem in maintaining a proper balance between production and consumption.

During the closing months of Felix' governorship, another conflict arose in Caesarea between the Syrian and Jewish inhabitants of the city over equality in citizenship rights. The Jews based their claim on the fact that Herod had founded the city while the Syrians were far more in the majority. Street riots followed which had to be put down by provincial troops, and the entire matter was ultimately submitted to the emperor for his decision.

The Apostle Paul was also imprisoned in Caesarea during the governorship of Felix, the details of which are given in the Acts of the Apostles.

Also during the procuratorship of Felix, Claudius Caesar, the emperor, died and was succeeded by Nero. During the first years of his reign he added a certain section of Galilee, Tiberias, and Taricheae to the domain of Agrippa II. He also gave him Julias, a city of Perea, with fourteen villages surrounding it.⁴³

As a successor to Felix, Nero sent Porcius Festus.⁴⁴ "Though disposed to act righteously, (he) found himself utterly unable to undo the mischief wrought by the misdeeds of his predecessors," writes the historian, Schürer.⁴⁵

During the rule of Festus, the dispute over civil rights in Caesarea was decided in the favor of the Syrians. In this way, the Syrians became lords of the city and made living unbearable for the Jews; hence, they became even more disorderly than before. This caused an outbreak of the Jews in 66 A.D. which Josephus regards as the beginning of the Great War.⁴⁶

⁴³. Jos. Ant., xx, 8, 4.

⁴⁴. A.D. 60-62.

⁴⁵. Op. cit., Div. I, Vol. II, p. 183.

⁴⁶. Jos. Ant., xx, 8, 9; Wars, ii, 14, 4.

The Apostle Paul also appeared before this Roman governor and demanded an imperial hearing of his case in Rome from him.

Trouble with the Sicarii increased in this period and false prophets continued to deceive the people. Festus died after being in office but two years and was followed by two men who only succeeded in intensifying Jewish hatred of everything Roman. During the interim, until a successor to Festus could arrive in Palestine, anarchy prevailed in Jerusalem. It was during this time that Ananus, the newly appointed high priest assembled the Sanhedrin and brought accusations against James, the brother of Jesus, and some of his companions and had them stoned.⁴⁷ By this act, Ananus usurped the authority which belonged only to the Roman procurators. When the newly appointed governor arrived he threatened Ananus with punishment, but Agrippa II solved the situation by removing Ananus from the priesthood.⁴⁸

We cannot exempt the priesthood from this rebellious spirit abroad in the land. Bitter quarrels broke out between the chief priests and the lower priesthood. Even the worst deeds of the Sicarii seem to have been sanctioned by the priesthood for their own purposes. The forty men who bound themselves to a vow to assassinate Saint Paul illustrate the principles of these priests.⁴⁹

Albinus⁵⁰ was sent to replace Festus when Nero heard of the latter's death. Josephus testifies of this procurator that there was no wickedness which could be mentioned in which he was not involved.⁵¹ His one ambition seemed to have been to obtain money. Public and private treasures were plundered and the people were burdened with exces-

47. Jos. Ant., xx, 9, 1.

48. Jos. Ant., xx, 9, 1.

49. Cf. Acts 23, 12 ff.

50. A.D. 62-64.

51. Jos. Wars, ii, 14, 1.

sive taxes so that all the people had to suffer oppression under his exactions. He also accepted bribes from his political opponents as well as his supporters. He made a pretense of opposing the Sicarri but would accept bribes from them for their release. The Sicarri also obtained the release of their imprisoned followers by holding governmental or priestly officials as hostages.⁵²

When Albinus heard that he was to be replaced by Gessius Florus, as a parting gesture, he released all those imprisoned for minor offenses in return for stipulated sums of money and had those put to death whom he thought worthy of such a fate. By this means he emptied the prisons, but filled the country with robbers.⁵³

The completion of the work on the Temple at this time left eighteen thousand workmen without employment—an additional treat to the security of Jerusalem and surrounding territory. An appeal was made to Agrippa II who was governor of the Temple. He alleviated this serious economic problem by permitting the use of the Temple treasury for employing these men to have the streets of the city paved with white stone. This misuse of Temple funds was an act of great offense to the Jews. Furthermore, the Levites were permitted to wear white vestments as they functioned in the Temple which was contrary to Jewish law. In this way the Temple was desecrated and the people embittered.

Gessius Florus⁵⁴ was the last procurator and also the worst, who "filled Judea with abundance of miseries." Josephus writes: "This Florus was so wicked, and so violent in the use of his authority, that the Jews took Albinus to have been (comparatively) their benefactor;

52. *Ibid.* and *Jos. Ant.*, xx, 9, 3.

53. *Jos. Ant.*, xx, 9, 5.

54. A.D. 64-66.

so excessive were the mischiefs he brought upon them."⁵⁵ The robbery of individuals seemed too petty to him; he plundered whole cities and ruined entire communities. If only the robbers would share the spoil with him, they were allowed to carry on their operations unhindered.

Josephus concludes his characterization of this procurator, despairing of words to describe his baseness, by saying:

And what need I say any more upon his head? since it was this Florus who necessitated us to take up arms against the Romans, while we thought it better to be destroyed at once, than by little and little.⁵⁶

To avenge the many insults perpetrated against Jerusalem and all Israel by this Roman governor, after several unsuccessful efforts at arbitration, Judea arose in one mighty, bloody, desperate effort to throw off the Roman yoke. Death and destruction reigned on every hand. Agrippa II sought in vain to quell the rage of the infuriated mob. Cestius Gallus, the governor of Syria, also undertook to quash the rebellion, but was unsuccessful. He was driven back with great slaughter and arrived at Antioch with only a remnant of the army with which he had set out.

Judea was now in open rebellion against Rome. It was a mad and desperate revolt, for to declare war against Rome was to defy the whole force of the civilized world. And it was not long before the Jews felt the crushing power of this mighty empire. The Roman armies, led by Vespasian and his son and successor, Titus, conquered the Jews with the ultimate destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. with the slaughter of many lives on both sides. With the destruction of Jerusalem, the political influence of the Jewish nation was annihilated. Since that time, the Jews have never again been recognized as one of the states or kingdoms of the world.

⁵⁵. Jos. Ant., xi, 11, 1.

⁵⁶. Ibid.

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